

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 05379

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, SY
SUBJECT: 1978 CONGRESSIONAL COUNTRY REPORT ON HUMAN
RIGHTS PRACTICES; SYRIA

REF: STATE 212848

1. WE FEEL THAT NEA'S FIRST DRAFT OF THE CONGRESSIONAL COUNTRY REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS FOR SYRIA IS A BALANCED AND FAIR PICTURE OF THE SITUATION HERE. THIS REPORT, HOWEVER, WILL CAUSE MORE CONCERN IN THE SARG THAN LAST YEAR'S SINCE IT GOES INTO GREATER DETAIL AND SUGGESTS SECURITY OFFICIALS CONDONE TORTURE. WE SHOULD BE PREPARED FOR A HOSTILE RECEPTION. NEVERTHELESS, PRESIDENT ASSAD IS CONCERNED ABOUT HIS INTERNATIONAL IMAGE, AND, THEREFORE, IT IS BARELY POSSIBLE THAT THIS MAY HAVE A HEALTHY IMPACT BY PROVIDING AMMUNITION FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO SEE ABUSES CURTAILED.

2. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE REPORT SHOULD BE EXPANDED TO INCLUDE ADDITIONAL FIGURES AND SPECIFICS AS SUGGESTED IN STATE'S 212848. SINCE HARD AND ACCURATE STATISTICS ARE NOT PUBLIC INFORMATION AND WE CAN'T BE SURE OF OUR FACTS, WE MIGHT WEAKEN OUR CASE BY GIVING THE SARG A HANDLE TO DISCREDIT AND DISMISS OUR REPORT. CITING THE FIVE-YEAR
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PLAN, AS IN PARA VII WHICH SHOULD CITE SARG EXPENDITURE OF \$267.6 MILLION FROM 1976-1980 TO UPGRADE HEALTH FACILITIES, IS AN ACCEPTABLE WAY OUT OF THIS DILEMMA.

3. THE ONLY OTHER COMMENT WE HAVE IS THAT THE REPORT COULD MENTION THE ROLE OF THE VIGOROUS WOMEN'S UNION HERE, WHICH WORKS TO EXPAND WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE

SOCIETY AND ENGAGES THE SYRIAN TV, RADIO, PRESS AND
CHAPTERS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY TO EDUCATE MEN AND WOMEN
ALIKE IN THE NEW REALITIES WITH INCREASING SUCCESS.
WOMEN HAVE, FOR EXAMPLE, FOR THE FIRST TIME JOINED THE
RANKS OF THE POLICE THIS YEAR.

4. PLEASE KEEP US ADVISED AS THE REPORT WENDS ITS WAY
THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT AND LET US KNOW IF FURTHER INFOR-
MATION IS NEEDED. SEELYE

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